

Casino's HR department and Gaming Commission move to new offices

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

For Spirit Mountain Casino's Human Resources Department, the new offices in the new casino addition are going to be smaller, but there are advantages — more training space, a hearing room and an actual interview room.

"We've been conducting interviews in spare offices," said Tribal member Camille Mercier, the casino's Human Resources director.

The countdown to the casino's Human Resources Department move began in February 2007, when the Tribe broke ground on the casino's South Expansion. It will mean an awful lot of things to the Tribe — a new, bigger buffet, the return of bingo and booking major entertainment acts.

"Saturday Night Live" veteran Dana Carvey and the music group Blues Traveler are scheduled to perform May 16 and 17, respectively, during the expansion's opening days.

The South Expansion Project will add 135,396 square feet to the existing casino. The two-story structure will feature an events/entertainment center, conference rooms on the first floor and office space for the Human Resources Department and the Grand Ronde Gaming Commission, currently housed off-property, on the second floor.

"Just write, 'Ahhhh,'" said Becky Lane, pretending to cry out all the details, frustrations and joys of the move a few days before it began

on Friday, Feb. 22. Lane is executive administrative assistant to Mercier, and the point person for the move.

"I'm the go-to person for the building," Lane said, "and I'm kind of attached to it. Anything that goes wrong, I'm going, 'Oh no, you've got to last a few more weeks.'"

While Mercier has no problem with the current building holding up for a few more weeks, she is not nearly so attached to it.

"This building leaks and looks like its going to fall over," she said.

"We were only supposed to be here for five years after the casino opened," Lane said. "It's been 12 years."

Lane said that the actual building, located a little more than a mile west of the casino on the south side of state Highway 18, is made up of four modules stacked together. They were originally from Camp Hanford in Richland, Wash.

The building was painted and some siding boards were changed out in recent years.

"I don't want to complain," Lane said, "because I really like the building, but ..."

The move provides benefits for both casino employees and guests.

"It will allow us to be closer to our internal customers, so they

can run over during a break or at lunch hour," Mercier said. "It will allow us to have better internal customer services. We can access training on-site and around the



Photo by Dean Rhodes

Information Systems Help Desk technician Nook Kaneko wheels in some of the computer equipment for Spirit Mountain Casino's Human Resources Department on Feb. 22.

clock during different shifts. It'll be a lot easier (for everybody working at the casino)."

Casino Administrative offices also will move to the South Expansion, and casino Surveillance already has.

Additionally, the new 16,000-square-foot Youth Activity Center will house the casino's Kids' Zone Playworld and arcade, and an additional 700 parking spaces will be added that will increase the casino's capacity to more than 3,600 vehicles.

"It's going to become a complete business and entertainment destination," said marketing copywriter June Coe. "We'll accommodate seminars, trade shows, weddings, family reunions, you name it and we can handle it, from 10 to 1,600 guests."

Just about all Tribal departments have been involved in the move, Mercier said, from Information Systems to Housekeeping.

Although Human Resources people will get to work as soon as they're moved to the facility, the new buffet and events center will not be ready until mid-May.

Good planning has made much of the move just a step above humdrum, with Mercier noting that the planning has been ongoing since the Tribe broke ground on the new expansion.

Coe said that the big difference is a lot of folks running around in jeans to help with the move, and Human Resources Training Specialist Vicki Merrill said, "I'm just packing my boxes." ■

All Oregon Tribes were consulted

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1998," said Lindy Trolan, the Tribe's Cultural Collections coordinator.

After much collaboration and work dedicated to the issue, an agreement was reached in 2003 that created a process for the return of Oregon-affiliated Native American objects in the Horner Collection to their rightful place — the Tribes.

All nine federally recognized Oregon Tribes were consulted during the process, and depending on artifact provenance (demonstrated history), all will receive parts of this collection, Trolan said.

"Collections staff have been working on physically packing the Grand Ronde-affiliated items at Oregon State University for the last month," said Trolan. "On Feb. 5, a group of staff went and actually picked up everything and brought the pieces back to Grand Ronde."



Photo by Courtney Terry

Tribal Cultural Collections coordinator Lindy Trolan, left, and Collections assistant Kim Mueller unpack Grand Ronde items included in the Horner Collection. The historically significant items have been transferred from Oregon State University to the Tribe after a decade of negotiations.

She called the effort "a feat of great significance that reunited items of Grand Ronde cultural heritage."

The collection will be stored until the planned museum and cultural center is ready.

"We do endeavor to use and share

the objects in our collection as much as possible without a museum," Trolan said. "They may be used in future education classes, and added to our Virtual Gallery (www.grandronde.org/culture/ikanum)."

The celebration will start with a

welcome and a range of remarks at 11 a.m. Lunch is scheduled for noon and a preview of all 600 items in what is now Grand Ronde's Horner Collection will be available for review from 1 to 3 p.m. ■